American Policy regarding Export of Military Equipment

†3870. SHRI JANESHWAR MISRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that America intends to transform India into a largest market of military equipment and defence materials and in view thereof the statement made by the US Secretary of State following the successful test of the "Agni" missile it appears that America wants to make India its tool;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that Britain, France and Germany have also condemned India on the tune of America; and

(d) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) Commenting on the flight test of the short-range variant of the Agni-I missile conducted by India on 25 January, 2002, US Secretary of State Colin Powell had stated in a televized interview that "we would have preferred that they had not fired it during this time of tension, but I don't think it escalates things that much more".

(c) The UK and Germany had expressed regret over India's decision to conduct the test 'particularly in the backdrop of current tensions' with Pakistan. France had described India's decision as 'certainly not the most desirable signal in the present regional context'.

(d) Government continues to stress that the aim of its missile programme is to ensure the credibility of India's minimum nuclear deterrent. The flight test was part of the technological evolution of this programme, and the timing was determined solely by technical factors. It had no political significance or relationship to any event.

Help to Nepal to combat Maoist insurgents

3871. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have offered equipment and training to Nepal for combating Maoist insurgents;

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†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.